3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

321

shaped iron instrument. The hole is made by holding the sharpened point of the iron on the piece of shell and rapidly revolving it between the palms of the hand. The pierced pieces are then rounded by crushing the edges against a stone with a cow's hoof.

281

Skins for wearing apparel, such as the hides of calves, goats, gazelles and other small animals are usually prepared by drying them first and dressing, then curing in ashes. After this they are stretched tight on poles stuck in the ground, and grease or oil is rubbed on them; then they are rubbed and worked for several hours, till they are soft, and the oil well worked into them. The hair is left on; a skin with a large amount of the hair gone would be considered very poor. The skin is worn with the hair on the outside.

283

Ropes are made from plant fibres, grass, and the leaves of the dom palm.

BOATS

501

Canoes are hollowed out of trees; this is, considering the poor tools they have, a very tiresome work, but the boats they make are fairly well; they are propelled by means of long sticks. A peculiar kind of boat or raft is made of the ambach tree; it is composed of a thick bundle of that pith-like, light cane tied together, turned up at the bows, and propelled by a paddle. These boats are so light that they are easily carried by one man.

[462]

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

534 281 322

Their musical instruments are small and large drums, a stringed instrument called *jow* and a wind instrument consisting in a cow's or antelope's horn; this is used in wars and in war-dances. The drums are legs of wood hollowed out and braced with skin; they are beaten either with the flat hand or with a stick. The *jow* is made by splitting in the middle a small section of a log and hollowing out the flat side a little. A piece of raw cow hide is stretched wet over this, and the flat side becomes the face of the instrument. A round stick some 18 inches long is fastened at each end. The ends of these two upright pieces pass through a cross-stick, which is large enough in diameter to allow them to pass this and still be quite strong. The holes are made in it by burning. The strings are made of tendons of animals or of the root bark of a certain plant. These are attached to the head, drawn across the face over a small wooden bridge, and wound about the cross-stick. They are then tightened, and the instrument is tuned by wetting these strings and tightening or loosening them about the crosspiece. They are tied to this stick, and by winding over themselves, keep from slipping.

323 [462] [415] [276 531]

POTTERY

Pottery is the handicraft of women. They make pots of different kind and size, for carrying water, cooking, brewing beer; they also make pitchers, cups for drinking beer, heads for smoking pipes, etc. Gourds and calabashes are also much used household tools. The pipe-heads are made of clay; they are large and rather clumsy, and are generally ornamented with some simple designs,

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

A Second Report on Housebuilding.

By R. W. Tidrick, of Doleib Hill.

Housebuilding among the Shillas[1] is a trade which comparatively few men learn, whether it is because apprentices are discouraged from learning it, or whether they do not want to learn, or cannot learn the trade well, I do not know. A well constructed tukl is neat and of really fine appearance. Dwelling houses are usually of the same size, conical in shape, walls of mud, sometimes reinforced with poles or corn stalks. The roofs are thatched with two kinds of grass. Family class prescribes which kind may be used in thatching the house.

Every adult member of the family as a rule has a part in construction. The women cut and carry in the grass and corn stalks and bring the water for mixing the mud for the walls. The men bring in the poles for the roof, make the rope, mix and carry the mud and do the real building of the house.

The material is usually collected for some time beforehand. Grass is cut and cocked, poles are brought from the timber and by wetting and heating are brought into the proper shape for rafters. Large circular bands for bracing the rafters and tying the thatch and grass to are made of withs of long coarse grass wrapped closely with rope. The rope for their use and for tying the grass down is made from a tall grass that has a long sheath. The grass is cut and brought in, and these sheaths are stripped off and after being soaked in water are bruised with clubs until the fiber comes apart easily. It is then dampened and twisted into rope. The rope maker sits on the ground holding the rope between his toes, and forms the rope by constantly adding new fiber and rolling the rope between the palms of his hands. It is made two-ply about one fourth of an inch thick.

The mud is prepared by mixing manure, ashes or fine broken dry grass with sandy earth. The mixing is done with the feet. The first step in construction is naturally the foundation. This is made by digging a shallow circular trench where the wall is to stand. The men carry the mixed mud in their hands, which must be quite stiff, and drop it in the trench. The builder forms it into the desired shape with his hands. A layer about six inches deep is put on at a time. But two or three layers a day are added. A little above the foundation an elliptical band of grass about three feet in depth is put in place to form the door. As the wall is built up the mud is built against this, which retains its form leaving the door the desired shape. Later the grass is removed. Toward the top the wall is flanged out like the mouth of a bell to receive the roof. Few houses have windows; when windows are made, they are scarcely six inches in diameter. In forming the roof the first step is the same as for the wall: a shallow circular trench is dug with the same circumference as the inner

[1] I. e. Shilluks.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

643 villages by the way. One of the most noticeable features of the activities surrounding Nyikang is the principle that he and his lieutenants are given, or take, what they want from Shilluk as they pass. This [173] embassy to the north may well have its origin in a raiding party, and the two sections, whose duty it is to perform this journey, may have been obliged to render this form of military service to Nyikang. Nowadays the silver and the cloth which were originally plunder, are [177] bought from Kosti with money supplied by the *reth*, and contributed [437] by Shilluk north of Kaka. Other requirements are ostrich feathers procured from the country round Kaka for the head pieces of the images of Nyikang and Dak, by the people of Mwomo, and ivory for bracelets to be worn by various functionaries at the installation itself. This was provided from the tusks of elephants slain by the Shilluk in 1938.[1] They are very rare in Shilluk country. Bamboo is brought from Fungor in the eastern Nuba Mountains for the bodies of Nyikang's image, and those of his sons Dak and Cal. This is brought by the [283] people of Akwobai. Certain sacred ropes made from the fibre of dom palms, which grow round Fanyikang, are brought by "Dak", who with his followers makes a special pilgrimage some two months before the ceremonies.

643 An obligation lies on the chiefs of Fanyikang to produce skins
324 of the female Mrs. Gray antelope from Fanyikang Island. These are
392 required as the high robes of honour of the *reth*. They are worn by the *reth* himself and all the important people in the ceremony. To be presented with a Mrs. Gray skin is a mark of the greatest esteem. They are royal game, and are only killed in the first year of a new *reth's* reign. On this occasion doubtless to save any complications with the government, which strictly preserves these antelopes, the operation was all over before the administration had word of it.

643 The houses of Fashoda had to be tidied up and new fences built,
356 but no new building in mud was done.

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[132] 1. In 1938 a few elephants invaded Shilluk country near Malakal, for the first time for many years.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

narrow circular hole in the ground about a foot deep, and steadily pounded with a heavy, six-foot pole wielded with all the strength a young pair of arms and shoulders can bring to the task. The coarse flour which results from this operation is soaked in water and then ground again, this time between two hard, rough stones. The flour is ready for use; it is mixed with water and boiled in a shallow iron dish to make a thick porridge, and this, flavoured with a little salt if that is available, and mixed with a little milk, constitutes the meal. Young women, however, are denied the luxury of milk, unless they are nursing a baby.

By the time the women have returned from the river, ground the flour and cooked the porridge, it is already nine o'clock. If it is the dry season and there is no work to be done in the fields, the men have been sitting around since sunrise busy perhaps with some task such as making a grass rope or weaving a fish trap, or merely gossiping away the time until their food is ready. When a woman has cooked her husband's breakfast she takes it into the living hut, and then leaves while he eats. She never eats with him, though she may return later, before he has finished, and eat her own meal sitting apart; she may also join other women and eat with them. When breakfast is over the men resume their tasks, and if there is a nice part of the river bank shaded with trees, such as is to be found at Detwok, they will take their rope making and weaving materials or their fishing net and pass the day there pleasantly enough. The young boys untether the bleating sheep and goats which pour out of the village running in search of grass and water, followed by their herds who add to the din by yelling and whistling; the cattle follow at a more leisurely pace in charge of the older boys. Soon the village is empty of animals save for the mangy, half-starved dogs nosing about for scraps of food, and the scraggy chickens picking up grains of millet scattered here and there in the compound. The little girls appear, staggering under the weight of the fat babies they carry on their hips. The women and the older girls go about the never-ending household tasks, cleaning up after their untidy menfolk,

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Immediately every dog in the district is awake and alert and the peace of the night is shattered by a cacophony of furious barking. In the mission we thump our wet pillows and call down blessings on the dogs and the hyena. Eventually quiet is restored as the hyena's howls die away in the distance. The village sleeps.

Such then, in brief, is a description of Shilluk village life, yet our understanding of these people would be very incomplete without a more detailed picture of their activities, their work and their play. To them, as to most of the inhabitants of the continent of Africa, the common saying, 'to work like a black', is scarcely applicable, for the Shilluk is no fonder of work than the next man, and he is not one of those restless individuals who are never happy unless busy with hand and brain making and mending and improving. Yet there are times when he must bestir himself, for he is essentially self-supporting. From soil and river he must provide himself with what he requires for food and shelter, and beyond this bare minimum of subsistence he must strive to get something more which he can sell or exchange for a cloth for himself and his wife, for a handful of salt and a drop of oil. If his labours yield no such margin, he may have to offer his services to the mission or the trader to earn the money to procure what he cannot provide himself. The Shilluk is, and indeed has to be, a man of all trades. To get the grain for his food he must farm the land, and although his methods of husbandry may be primitive, he is expert in the traditional way of farming. In fishing he is skilled in the use of the net, harpoon, spear and fish trap, and gets the best results possible from these methods. His house is neat and strongly built, and, according to one missionary of wide experience, is among the best thatched of all African houses. To cross the Nile on his fishing expeditions he must have a boat of some kind, and from a light, cork-like wood called ambach which grows plentifully in the Detwok area he constructs a beautiful, unsinkable canoe, light enough to be carried by one man, yet able to carry three people in perfect safety. To roof his house and make fences around it he uses the

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

463 824 [283] stalks of millet, binding them together with ropes which he makes of grass. The same grass provides him with the thatch for the roof, mats for his door, ropes of varying strength to tether his goats and cattle, and a rope of great thickness and strength to assist him in the dangerous sport of hunting the hippopotamus. From reeds gathered by the riverside he weaves grain baskets and fish traps. If a cow of his falls sick he can act as a veterinary doctor, and if he fails to effect a cure for the animal, he is quite competent at least to cure its hide! He makes his own pottery, beautifully symmetrical and balanced, without the aid of a wheel, and fires it in an earth oven, and grows the calabashes which provide him with drinking bowls. He can turn his hand to shoemaking, fashioning a clumsy but serviceable sandal from hippopotamus hide and cow skin by using his spear blade very cleverly as both knife and awl. When his work is done he will fill his home-made pipe with tobacco he has grown and cured himself and gratefully drink the beer that his able wife has brewed for him. There are, naturally, some among them who are more gifted than others, or who show a special aptitude in some particular craft and therefore specialize in it. Thus, a Shilluk householder who wishes to have a superior type of thatching on his house will call in an expert to do it; yet such experts are comparatively few, because they are unnecessary in a community where each one is brought up to do everything for himself, and has no other work to prevent him from living a communal tribal life in full. The one craft that is completely exercised by a special few is that of the blacksmith, and this because ironwork is so small a need in the life of the Shilluk. It is true that his two spears and the small hoe he uses for cultivation are indispensable to him, but once he acquires them they last a lifetime, and it would be a waste for him to collect the—to him—elaborate and expensive tools of the blacksmith's trade for which he would seldom, or never, have use. If ever he needs a new spear or hoe he will, by buying or bartering, obtain it from the local smith, or—as is more likely in these modern days—make his way to the nearest Arab

463 [232] [323] [415] [294] [237] [326] 411 412 [437] [439]